

New Institutions in the 18th Century Miskolc (County Administration, Roman Catholic Parish Church, Minorite Order, Royal Dominion and Hungarian Chamber)

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At the end of the Turkish era the royal administration recovered the Diósgyőr dominium, including Miskolc, and in 1702 the inhabitants of Miskolc took loans and redeemed themselves from the serfdom for half a century. In 1755 the town returned to the administration of the crown's dominium falling under royal property law, and offices of the dominium were established in Miskolc, and the establishments and facilities of the economic and business activities of the dominium appeared. After an almost 150 years' predominance of the Reformed Church, a Roman Catholic parish was re-established in Miskolc and in the 1720s; a Catholic church was also built. The gaining ground of Catholicism was reinforced by the settlement of the Minorite order in Miskolc. The increase and strengthening of the central functions of the town are indicated by the fact that in the 18th century Miskolc became the permanent seat of Borsod County.

Key words: The 18th century. Catholic parish. Minorite order. Redemption. County hall.

At the end of the Turkish era, there were immense changes in the society, administration and functions of Miskolc, too. In addition to the new political structure emerging in the Hungarian Kingdom, the basis of these changes was created by the special social changes taking place in the 17th century town. In the Turkish era, a good number of Miskolc citizens having the legal status of serfs were exempted from the services by their landlords, the pledge holder aristocratic families of the Diósgyőr castle and dominium. Thus, a liberated serf status (libertine) was created, much freer than the former one. In addition, at the beginning of the 18th century, the economic administration of the Habsburg monarch, the Hungarian Chamber recovered the dominium, including the market town of Miskolc, from the pledge holder lessees, and made it royal property or the so called crown dominium again.

This new situation made it possible for the market town of Miskolc to redeem itself from its dependence from landowners in exchange for an enormous sum paid to the state treasury. With the support of the town leadership, the inhabitants of Miskolc took loans and redeemed themselves in that way. This redemption freed the town and its inhabitants for 50 years, up to 1755, and even if only for half a century, Miskolc became similar to free royal boroughs. Redemption was a new legal institution, and as such, perhaps the most important in the Early modern age history of the town, for which no new urban institution had to be established as the town hall had already been in the main square of Miskolc for a century and a half. It requires further research to investigate how the citizens of Miskolc used their freedom which lasted for half a century, or whether it was „worth“ taking out the 41,000 florins loan, which required great sacrifice to pay back. In any case, the quantum, that is, the part of the amount of credit and its interest levied upon the inhabitants of the town subject to the real estate of the individual or the family, irrespective of their noble or commoner legal status, was definitely a new legal institution. In this way, real estate in Miskolc, whether it was owned by a nobleman or a serf (whether intravillanum, situated within town boundaries, or extravillanum, that is, plough-land or plots of land outside the town), the vineyards and wine cellars did not only form the basis of economics or subsistence but also linked Miskolc citizens to the freedom and legal status of their town and the preservation of the latter. This developed a kind of

sense of urban identity in the citizens of Miskolc. At the same time, quantum and levied tax were proportionate to property, which, under feudal conditions, when pursuant to the laws of the country, noblemen paid no taxes, meant that in Miskolc, a special type of modern proportionate sharing of taxation prevailed albeit for only half a century.

Redemption, the taking out of the loan and the determination of quantum made it necessary to compile the first land register in Miskolc after the committee set up by the town examined the possessory relations of Miskolc citizens. Free royal cities already had a permanently kept land register in the Middle Ages but in Miskolc, it was only in 1702 that the first cadastral land register was compiled with the title *Kötelkönyv* ('Book of ropes'). Although the cadastral land register was considered to be a genuinely new institution in the town, and in 1793, the landlord, the Hungarian Chamber had another huge new land register compiled of the town in Latin (*Liber fundualis*), which the citizens of Miskolc caused to be translated into Hungarian. These 18th century land registers remained static surveys reflecting conditions at a given point in time. Modern cadastral survey was only introduced in Miskolc and elsewhere in Hungary in the second half of the 19th century. The compilation of the land register and the collection of quantum extended the authority of town leadership, enhancing their power.¹

Town privileges were reinforced by the fact that at the end of the 17th century, in addition to the already existing two national fairs, Miskolc won the right to hold two more nationwide fairs, thus having one lasting several days and occupying the greater part of the town for several days in every season (Juliana's day: 16 February, Ascension Day: 10 days before Easter, Lukas' day: 18 October, Samuel's day: 6 August). Miskolc fairs and markets were famous for being busy and frequented but with regard to the townscape, they made Miskolc more similar to a village than to an elegant city. As a matter of fact, it was the great bustle and the liveliness that strangers and travellers arriving in Miskolc noticed while the low houses, the unpaved streets, the poor quarters populated by serfs, the floods caused by the River Szinva and the brook named Pece and the mud often had a depressing impression on them. Miskolc was rather famous for its wine, bread and the delicious meat fried in market tents and not so much for its elegant buildings or clean streets as in many respects, it was village-like.

At the end of the century, the management of Miskolc tried to get free royal city rights, for this there was a completely new institution introduced to the already existing chief judge's charge and to the elected town council, i. e. the so called provost or spokesman, with German word *Vormünder*, who was representative of the external council, whose members were not elected. The *Vormünder's* Hungarian name was *polgármester* that is burgomaster, and the same system had been used for example in free royal city of Kaschau (Hungarian: Kassa, today: Košice, Slovakia). Despite the efforts, Miskolc had never won these rights.

In the late 17th and early 18th century, the management of the city had acquired estates in the region of Miskolc, mainly fields and meadows, but also included 50 serfs' (mainly cottagers') possessions, so in the first half of the century, during the redemption era, the city which had a serf status before, became a landlord having even serfs in its possession. From town money, the leadership of the town bought grazing grounds in nearby *Ládháza-puszta* (*Ládháza Desert*) together with serfs. Town community already had real property of its own, *intravillanum* and pieces of land suitable for cultivation outside the town, vineyards and even a mill in the 16th and 17th centuries. The town retained its farmstead even in the 18th century. In addition, the landless serfs living in the poor quarters of the town were also considered to be subjects of the town and had to pay rent for their tiny houses. But the plots of land, the homestead and the serfs were all in the territory of the town, the inhabitants of Miskolc

1 TÓTH, P. *A miskolci Kötelkönyv (Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén Megyei Levéltári Füzetek, 22)*. Miskolc, 1986.

earlier had only possessed vineyards in the neighbouring village of Hejőcsaba. The town had the same relationship with the inhabitants of Ládháza as any other landlord. It entered into a contract with the serfs here, mainly with landless ones, and allowed them to elect the village mayor. In minor issues, serfs even had the right to set up a court of first instance of their own. However, major issues were decided by the court of the landlord, the community of Miskolc.²

Really new features in 18th century Miskolc were the permanent stores, especially the Greek store as inhabitants had only been able to do shopping in the weekly or nationwide fairs or in the houses and workshops of craftsmen earlier. It was a medieval topographical feature of the town that its city centre had just one long main road, which was an advantage in the establishment of stores as they were easily accessible on the two sides of the main road, also functioning as the market-place. While shops represented a novelty in the economy of the town in the 18th century, the lessees and keepers of the shops introduced a new social group into the town, that of strangers. Earlier, the inhabitants and society of Miskolc were Hungarian by character. From the Middle Ages, there naturally appeared strangers in the town but they did not form a coherent social group. The first such group was that of merchants from the Balkans who were called Greeks on account of their Greek orthodox religion, and liturgics and partly native languages. They appeared in Miskolc in the 18th century, established an independent legal institution or company called *compania*, as well as their own Greek orthodox denomination, first with a meeting-house, then with a church. The Jews, appearing a little later, at the beginning of the 18th century, formed their community in a similar way. It is true, however, that their community was religion-based and not occupation-based. They were represented by their religious leaders before town jurisdiction.

The strangers settling in the town in the early 18th century³ enriched the townscape not only with their shops, churches and other religious institutions (e.g. a Jewish bath) but their graveyards also appeared as new institutions. Until the end of the 17th century, the town only had two Protestant (Calvinist) graveyards. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Catholics established a new Catholic graveyard around and near the new parish church, then the Greeks and the Jews got permission to establish their own graveyards, too.

After the Turkish wars, the strengthening of the Catholic church in the form of recatholisation played an important role in the reorganization of the Hungarian Kingdom so after the almost 150 years' predominance of the Reformed Church, a Roman Catholic parish was re-established in Miskolc at the end of the 17th century. In the 1720s, a Catholic church was also built. The topographical features of the church well reveal its late foundation as the medieval Gothic church in the middle of the town remained in the possession of the Reformed whereas the Catholic Church was built in the place of the medieval hospital and cottars' quarter, at the edge of the town. The patron of the parish was the monarch, represented by the Diósgyőr dominium as the landowner. Until the end of the 18th century, the number of Catholics increased steadily although Calvinist (Reformed) dominance prevailed throughout the Early modern age.⁴

The gaining ground of Catholicism was reinforced by the settlement of the Minorite order in Miskolc. In the Middle Ages, there were no religious orders in the town but only Benedictine and Pauline monasteries in the surroundings, possessing mills, noble estates and taverns in the town. Thus, the Minorite order, appearing in the 1720s, was the first religious order, which built an impressive Baroque monastery and a church with two towers in the place of

2 SERESNÉ SZECŐFI, A. Városgazdálkodás. In *Miskolc története Vol. III. 1702 – 1847*. Ed. Faragó, T. Miskolc 2000, 395-42.

3 GYULAI, É. Lengyelek Miskolcon a 18. század végén. In *Studia Miskolcínensia* (III) 1999, 76-83.

4 GYULAI, É. Topográfia és városkép. In *Miskolc története Vol. III. 1702 – 1847*. Ed. Faragó, T. Miskolc 2000, 57-150

the parish church of the medieval New Town, having been destroyed in 1544. The Minorites also maintained an elementary school so in addition to spiritual care and Catholic conversion, Catholic education appeared as a new feature of town life. The crypt of the Minorite church became the burial place for the Catholic elite of Miskolc and of the neighbouring countryside, where the families converted to Catholicism and rising into the aristocracy also buried their dead in the second half of the 18th century.⁵

The settlement of the Miskolc Minorites was due to provost Didacus Kelemen, who died in Miskolc in 1744, and whose person, activities and sanctity won him special respect even in his life. Not much later, his corpse, buried in the crypt of the Minorite church, became a place of pilgrimage. What is more, even the process of his beatification started though it has not been completed up to the present day. The cult of Didacus Kelemen put Miskolc on the map of Catholic piety in the 18th century so that pilgrims started arriving in the town, the population of which had almost exclusively consisted of Protestants, and which had had no other religious entity just the Reformed church half a century before. The processions and street spectacles of the Minorites and the Catholic parish also represented a novelty. For these, participants and 'tourists' or spectators also arrived in Miskolc from the region. As a matter of fact, the jurisdiction and the officials of the Diósgyőr royal dominion made the Corpus Christi procession obligatory for the Protestant members of the guilds, as well, which caused a lot of disagreement and tension.⁶

In 1755, the market town of Miskolc lost its freedom again with its non-noble inhabitants sinking back into the status of serfs again although they were much freer than the inhabitants of serf villages. The town returned to the administration of the Diósgyőr royal dominion falling under royal property law so both the Hungarian Chamber as the economic organization of royal administration and the institutions of direct dominium administration appeared in the town. The dominium had its centre in the neighbouring market town of Diósgyőr laying directly under the medieval castle.

Only the offices related to the administration of the town were established in Miskolc, and the establishments and facilities of the economic and business activities of the dominium appeared. The following dominium officials had their houses and offices in Miskolc: prefect as chief economic official, dominium prosecutor (lawyer), provisor, dominium steward, market supervisor and overseer. The four custom-houses or custom-stalls, put up on the roads leading into Miskolc, should also be mentioned here. These offices controlled the economic activities of the dominium, here namely in many enterprises and plants in the town. Such were the three inns: a one-storey building at the edge of the market-place, a two-storey building in Piac (= Market) Street and a two-storey inn at the edge of the town, the four pubs, the brewery, the slaughterhouse and several butcher's shops, two corn-mills in the town, a fulling mill and a tanning mill at the edge, as well as a wood-yard and a cartwright's workshop. These dominium enterprises brought huge revenues for the treasury in the populous market town. Catholic elementary schools together with the flats for teachers and choir-masters also counted among dominium institutions. Miskolc also had a secondary school but it was maintained by the Reformed Church.⁷

The institutions of the Hungarian Chamber meant a novelty not only through their official operation but provided important features for the town with their buildings, too. The buildings

5 GYULAI, É. A minoriták öröksége Miskolcon. In *Miskolci Keresztény Szemle* (VI.) 2010, 2, 57-68.

6 *Isten szolgája P. Kelemen Didák O.F.M. Conv. levelei 1714 – 1743*. Ed. Rákos, B. R. Roma 1979.

7 DOBROSSY, I. – IGLÓI, G. Koronauradalmi épületek Miskolcon a 19. század elején, 1-2. In *A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve* (20, 24) 1982, 1985. 77-98, 137-164.

of the dominion were made by the engineers and master builders of the Hungarian Chamber in Baroque style with the use of modern technologies so these buildings served as a model for the population and community of the town in their construction activities. Thus, the dominion was a decisive factor not only in the economic life of the town but also formed townscape and the taste of the citizens.

In Miskolc, the first guilds were established in the early 16th century, in the Middle Ages. Then, in the 17th century, several crafts established new guilds but handicraft industry had its golden age in the 18th century. In the Hungarian Kingdom, the 18th century was the second flourishing period for the guilds. This was the time when Miskolc became a regional handicraft centre. At this time, the guilds got their privileges, that is, the operational license and their regulations almost exclusively from the monarch but as they were also market town associations, they were accountable to two legal authorities, the dominion and town leadership. They were supervised by both authorities. The dominion even appointed a separate inspector to check up on them but the town also ordered their products and services, and furthermore, it had a say in their self-government, as well. The guilds did not only appear in the markets and fairs with their products but they also sold their products from their workshops. It was, however, a novelty of the 18th century that they set up permanent stalls in Miskolc with the permission of the town. These were simple wooden structures, half way between storehouse and real shop, and became a characteristic feature of Miskolc streets.

The increase and strengthening of the central functions of the town are indicated by the fact that in the 18th century, Miskolc became the permanent seat of the Borsod county. In the Middle Ages and in the Turkish era, the general assemblies of the institution of the noble *universitas* (community) i. e. county were held in different places with the documents, seal and valuables being kept by the sub-prefect himself. In the period of the 18th century political consolidation, the county needed a permanent seat, which was found in its most populous market town and most dynamically developing centre, Miskolc. Its position near Diósgyőr, the centre of the former royal dominion may also have contributed to the selection of Miskolc as seat. The storeyed county hall was built around 1730. It was described by the renowned scholar of the era, Mathias Bél as an elegant and beautiful building. The county hall was built on the combined area of three units of land held in villeinage, opposite the town hall in the centre. The county assemblies attracted the noblemen of the county to the town so there was an elegant crowd in Miskolc on these occasions. In addition to the offices and the assembly hall, the building also housed the county prison and even a Catholic chapel. The county hall served as a model for the architecture of the noble elite, and thus in Miskolc, where there was no storeyed house in the 17th century, several palaces were built for local noble and aristocratic families in the 18th century.⁸

Although the building of the Miskolc County Hall, housing the general assembly and the offices of the county council even now, was rebuilt several times in the 19th century, its architectural form and partly its exterior preserved a lot of the former Baroque building. In fact, the construction of the roads and bridges around the town was also the responsibility of the county so the county set an example (and provided jobs) for Miskolc's inhabitants with traffic-related construction, too.

The new institutions and buildings of the second half of the century were related to the churches and religions newly appearing in the 18th century. By the end of the century, the Greek merchants from the Balkans settling in Miskolc had their church built in late Baroque

8 GYULAI, É. Bor és kenyér I-II. Miskolc-toposok az újkori országsmereti irodalomban : Miskolc toposok az újkori utazási és honismereti irodalomban. In *A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve* (XLIII–XLIV) 2004 – 2005, 355–385, 189–220.

style only with one but very high tower, which became a landmark and sight in the town. Next to the church, a storeyed Greek school was also erected. At the end of the 18th century, Lutherans also built a new stone church instead of the old wooden one. For the Jews, only a meeting-house was built as yet but they were allowed to establish a ritual bath on the small channel tapping the River Szinva. In addition to the new religious groups and churches, the institutional system of the Reformed Church was also extended as the medieval Gothic church proved to be too small for the community at the end of the 18th century (by which time, as a matter of fact, there had been a demographic explosion in the town). So, at the very end of the 18th century, the second Reformed church was built in the area of the medieval new town. Although Lutherans settled in the town relatively late, at the beginning of the 19th century, their school attracted Slovak and German speaking Lutherans from the northern counties, as well, because in addition to education, it was also important to learn the Hungarian language, and Miskolc had remained a town with a large majority Hungarian population.

With its changes and several new social, possessory, religious, urban and other institutions in the 18th century, Miskolc participated in the early modernization of the Hungarian Kingdom. At the same time, it possessed several specific institutions and innovations that were altogether characteristic of this market town only. Thanks to this, it deserves the attention of historians both in itself and in comparison with other Hungarian and Central European towns and cities.

ABBREVIATIONS

BAZML = Borsod–Abauj–Zemplén Megyei Levéltár [Archives of Borsod–Abauj–Zemplén County], Miskolc, Hungary

OSZK = Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library], Budapest, Hungary

AG OFMConv = Frati Minori Conventuali, L'Archivio generale, Roma

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Fig. 1. Map of Miskolc, around 1770 (OSZK© TK 2047©)



Fig 2. Didacus Kelemen, engraving, late 18th century (AG OFMConv©, after Rákos, 1979)

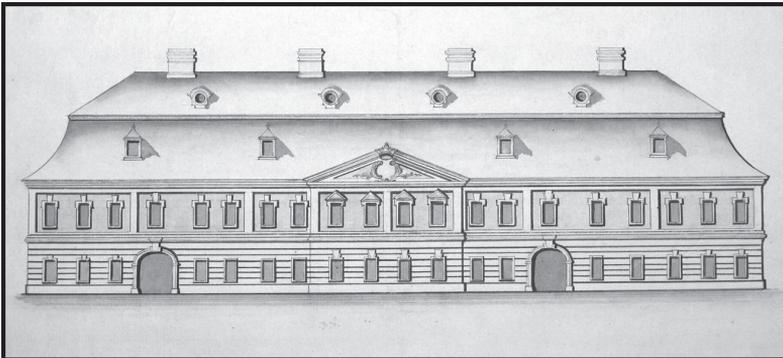


Fig 3. Delineation of the County Hall, 1795. BAZML IV-501/e. 859/1795 (Photo: BAZML©)



Fig 4. View of Miskolc on a guild's certificate, 1825. (Private collection of György Barna©)